

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01026 311424Z

14

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OPR-02 OC-05 CCO-00

OMB-01 SAM-01 SAB-01 ACDA-05 EB-07 SCCT-01 A-01 SY-05

/103 W

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O P 311230Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8436

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01026 311424Z

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
COMMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1026

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: NORMALIZING TREND CONTINUES ALONG WITH POLITICAL
BARGAINING

REF: BEIRUT 0994 (1425Z)

1. ALTHOUGH FURTHER SHOOTING WAS REPORTED BETWEEN
CHIYAH AND AIN EL-RMUMANNEH DURING PAST 24 HOURS, IT
HARDLY STIRRED THE CALM PREVAILING THROUGHOUT THE
COUNTRY. THE TREND TOWARD NORMAL LIFE IN THE CAPITAL
CONTINUES. THE GENERAL MOOD IS ONE OF GROWING OPTI-
MISM TINGED WITH LINGERING CAUTION. PEOPLE REMAIN
UNCERTAIN ABOUT LONG-TERM PROSPECTS, HOWEVER, AS
SHOWN FOR EXAMPLE BY A SUDDEN UPSURGE IN VISA APPLI-
CATIONS AT THIS EMBASSY BY PERSONS WHO CLEARLY "WANT
OUT".

2. A MEETING OF THE HIGHER MILITARY COMMITTEE JAN
30 DECIDED AMONG OTHER THINGS TO PUT THE ARMY IN
CONTROL OF THE ROAD TO THE AIRPORT AND TO BEGIN
MOVES TO SECURE THE PORT AND THE INDUSTRIAL ZONE OF
MKALLES IN THE EASTERN SUBURBS. FACTORIES IN THAT
AREA WERE URGED TO RESUME OPERATIONS NEXT MONDAY,
FEB 2.

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01026 311424Z

3. THE AFFAIR OF THE ARMY DESERTER LT. AHMAD AL
KHATIB IS ATTRACTING CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION IN THE
LEFTIST PRESS HERE. HE WAS EVIDENTLY NOT RPT NOT
ARRESTED EITHER IN SYRIA OR LEBANON, AS REPORTED
EARLIER (SEE ALSO DAMASCUS 557). HE APPEARS TO
HAVE MADE SOME ARRANGEMENT AS YET UNCLEAR WITH THE
MAINLINE PALESTINIAN FORCES IN THE BEKAA VALLEY.
BUT HE HAS PUBLICLY REFUSED TO REJOIN THE ARMY

UNDER THE PRESENT GENERAL AMNESTY. APART FROM THIS CONSPICUOUS EXCEPTION, HOWEVER, DATT SOURCES STATE THAT THE AMNESTY IS DRAWING LARGE NUMBERS OF SOLDIERS AND GENDARMES BACK INTO ARMY AND INTERNAL SECURITY RANKS.

4. POLITICALLY, ACTIVITY CENTERS AROUND THE MEETING OF MOSLEM LEADERS THAT TOOK PLACE JAN 30 AT ARAMOUN AND A MEETING OF MARONITE LEADERS SCHEDULED FOR TODAY, JAN 31, AT KASKLIK. THE ARAMOUN GATHERING JOINED THE SUNNI MUFTI, SHIITE IMAM MUSA SADR, THE DRUZE SHEP AKL, PREMIER KARAME, SAEB SALAM, ABDALLAH YAFI, AND KAMAL JUMBLATT. SYRIAN MEDIATORS KHADDAM AND JAMIL WERE ALSO PRESENT. THE CONFEREES TOOK NO DECISIONS, BUT DISCUSSED THE WHOLE RANGE OF PROJECTED REFORMS. THE ISSUE OF ENSHRINING THE MARONITE PRESIDENCY IN THE CONSTITUTION WAS A MAJOR TOPIC OF DEBATE. SOME SUNNIS, NOTABLY SAEB SALAM, REPORTEDLY PREFER TO LEAVE THE TRADITION UNWRITTEN, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO DISAGREEMENT ON THE TRADITION ITSELF. CHRISTIANS ANXIOUS ABOUT "GUARANTEES" OF THEIR FUTURE POLITICAL STATUS WOULD PREFER TO SEE THE TRADITION WRITTEN DOWN--ALTHOUGH THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THEY DO NOT VIEW THE PANDORA'S BOX OF AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION AS NECESSARILY THE OPTIMUM TECHNIQUE. KAMAL JUMBLATT APPARENTLY CAME UP WITH THE SUGGESTION OF A WRITTEN DOCUMENT OUTSIDE THE CONSTITUTION AT THE JAN 31 MEETING, AND THIS IS CURRENTLY THE LEADING POSSIBILITY. JUMBLATT, HOWEVER, ALSO MUDDIED THE WATERS BY MAKING OTHER SUGGESTIONS ARISING FROM HIS LONG-STANDING REFORM PROGRAM, TRYING TO SNEAK THESE INTO THE REFORM PACKAGE. THE MOST PROMINENT OF THESE SUGGESTIONS WAS PROPORTIONAL

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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 01026 311424Z

TIONAL REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, AN OLD JUMBLATT FAVORITE.

5. TODAY'S ASLIK GATHERING BRINGS TOGETHER FATHER KASSIS (MARONITE MONKS), CAMILLE CHAMOUN (NATIONAL LIBERALS), PIERRE GEMAYEL (KATAEB), CHAKER ABOUSLEIMAN (MARONITE LEAGUE), AND FUEAD SHEMALI (DEFENDERS OF THE CEDARS). THE RECENT DECLARATION OF KHADDAM THAT SYRIA WOULD GUARANTEE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO AGREEMENT HAS BEEN WELL RECEIVED BY BOTH THE NATIONAL LIBERALS AND THE KATAEB, ALTHOUGH THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE CLEARLY REMAINS A BURNING ONE FROM THE CHRISTIAN STANDPOINT. THIS QUESTION IS EXPECTED TO FIGURE PROMINENTLY IN THE KASKLIK DIS-

CUSSIONS, AS WELL AS THE EMERGING ISSUE OF HOW TO INCORPORATE THE MARONITE PRESIDENCY IN THE ACCORD.

6. THESE AND OTHERPENDING PROBLEMS MAY HAVE TO AWAIT THE FRANGIE-ASAD SUMMIT TO BE FINALLY HAMMERED OUT. MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THE SUMMIT WILL TAKE PLACE NEXT WEEK, BUT ALL SOURCES STRESS THAT THE DATE HAS NOT YET BEEN DECIDED.FRANGIE STILL WISHES TO BE ASSURED THAT SECURITY WILL HOLD UP BEFORE MAKING THE TRIP. A SPECIAL CABINET MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, FEB 2 IS SUPPOSED TO REVIEW THE ENTIRE CEASEFIRE/POLITICAL SITUATION, AND IF ALL GOES WELL FRANGIE MAY GO TO THE SUMMIT THE FOLLOWING DAY. THE RESULTING JOINT COMMUNIQUE MAY OUTLINE SYRIAN GUARANTEES, AFTER WHICH FRANGIE COULD ANNOUNCE THE LONG-PENDING POLITICAL ACCORD AT THE REGULAR WEEKLY CABINET SESSION WEDNESDAY, FEB 4. THIS IS THE SCENARIO PRESENTLY BEING MOST WIDELY SUGGESTED, THOUGH, OF COURSE, THERE COULD BE SLIPPAGE ANYWHERE ALONG THE WAY.
LAMBRAKIS

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